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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001642

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINS MCAP MARR RS PL

SUBJECT: NO OFFICIAL GOR POSITION ON PATRIOT MISSILES IN POLAND

Classified By: Acting Political M/C David Kostelancik. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) MFA North America Desk First Secretary Aleksey Ivanov told us the GOR had no official position on the possible rotating-basis deployment of Patriot anti-missile systems in Poland. He told us that many GOR officials, however privately oppose such a move because they interpret Polish statements about needing Patriots to defend against possible threats as being inherently anti-Russian. "It is clear to us that Polish statements are aimed at Russia," according to Ivanov. He nevertheless offered his view that if the U.S. deployed Patriot missiles in Poland, the GOR likely "would not do anything about it." Ivanov discounted statements made by Deputy CHOD Anatoliy Nogovitsin in August 2008, in which he argued Patriot missiles in Poland would pose a threat to Russia. Ivanov repeated that no official GOR position on the issue existed, and said that such statements reflected Nogovitsin's personal opinion.

¶2. (C) A range of experts told us that from a military standpoint the GOR had no reason to oppose the possible deployment of Patriot missiles in Poland. Patriot missiles are strictly a defensive weapon, and since Russia has no intention of attacking Poland, they do not pose a threat to Russian security. The presence of U.S. troops that would accompany the Patriot missiles in Poland would be only a minor irritant to Russian military planners, the experts argued.

¶3. (C) From a political point of view, however, Russia opposes any deployment of Patriot missiles in Poland because it opposes any U.S. military presence in former Warsaw Pact states, according to experts. According to experts, this position represented the zero-sum view of security held by some of the Russian leadership. The GOR would view a decision by the U.S. to drop its plans to rotate Patriot missiles to Poland (as well as base elements of an anti-ballistic missile system) as a diplomatic victory, argued the experts.

BEYRLE